

Piute County Profile

Prepared for the:
Dixie, Fishlake & Manti-La Sal National Forests
Forest Plan Revision
Social and Economic Assessment

Prepared by:
Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
with assistance from:
Utah State University College of Natural Resources
Utah Division of Indian Affairs



**Utah Governor's Office
of Planning and Budget**
116 State Capitol
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114
(801) 538-1027
www.planning.utah.gov

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PIUTE COUNTY OVERVIEW



County Land Ownership

40.1% — Forest Service
 33.4% — Bureau of Land Mgt.
 12.7% — Private
 11.8% — State Trust Lands
 1.0% — Water Bodies
 0.9% — State Wildlife
 0.1% — Other
 0 % — Wilderness Areas
 0 % — Wilderness Study Area

source: SITLA, 2003

County Planned Uses

98% — Agriculture
 2% — Residential

source: Piute County

This overview contains observations drawn from the maps, economic and demographic trend data, and a review of county plans contained in this profile. In addition, it contains comments and explanations of county leaders and residents, gathered at workshops conducted to review this assessment.

Landscape

Piute County is centered on the Sevier River Valley, which is surrounded by mountainous peaks that capture rains that feed the river and irrigate fields. The valley and surrounding USFS lands provide good grazing, and livestock remains very important to the local economy. Agriculture is also key to the county's lifestyle and many residents wish to keep it that way. The majority of the County's population is settled in the valley in the towns of Circleville, Marysvale, Junction, and Kingston. The county is the third smallest geographically in Utah and is predominantly held in public lands.

Population

Piute County has the second smallest population in the state at just over 1,400 residents. Piute County's total population has grown slightly over the last 30 years, and is this slow growth is projected to continue for the coming decades. The younger population is expected to grow the slowest in coming years, while the Hispanic population has been growing and is expected to continue to do so. Many residents currently commute to employment opportunities outside the county. Students are also choosing to attend high school out of the county and as the young population shrinks, the local school district is having a hard time staying viable. Over the past two decades, Piute County has had higher unemployment and lower job growth rates than both the state and the nation and a current lack of economic diversity has made it difficult to attract and retain residents.

Economy

Agriculture is the primary employer of residents and is expected to remain strong, although jobs in government and trade are expected to make gains. Low agricultural wages make it difficult to make a living and many residents hold a diversity of jobs to raise their incomes. Mining, once a mainstay of Piute County, has dropped significantly but many residents noted numerous mining exploration efforts, although they have not paid off yet or are not considered regular employment. The Piute School District employs

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Current Issues

*economic development
building tourism
protecting agriculture,
mining, grazing, and timber
opportunities
access to public lands
youth residential institutions*

30 residents, and residential youth therapy camps are also making their mark on the local economy. Piute and Otter Creek Reservoirs have created some job opportunities while also providing local recreational activities and tourism opportunities. Tourism has not played as large a role in the local economy as it has in surrounding counties, but the county is working to develop this sector. Many small businesses now rely on some tourism business to remain viable. Fishlake National Forest is heavily used for motorized recreation and hunting in this region but still remains a unique and somewhat untapped tourism opportunity for the County. The Paiute Trail, built primarily for ATVs and snowmobiling is a popular and growing destination that locals are trying to build upon. A less obvious contributor to the local economy is a small numbers of retirees relocating to the larger towns. The county would like to encourage more year-round industry and has seen several new small businesses open in recent years.

Planning

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, and the County considers it a matter of policy to preserve rural environment and lifestyle. They would like to encourage economic development through timber, mining, and especially through tourism, but not at the expense of their surroundings. Residents also see economic development opportunities in the management of aspen for timber and possible mining resources. Most residents want operation of the public lands and state parks to continue as currently conducted, but expressed a desire for involvement in these decisions. Planning documents reviewed, which were available at the time of this assessment, include:

Piute County General Plan, 1994

Piute County Zoning Map

Piute County Recreation and Tourism Plan, 1998

Six County AOG, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2000

Utah State Historical Society, Beehive History: Utah Counties, 1988